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SUBJECT: CHANGES AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY MAY OPEN NEW DOORS

REF: LUANDA 0809

Classified By: CDA JEFF HAWKINS FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Angola's new foreign minister, Assuncao Afonso dos Anjos, is a well-known political figure with deep ties to President Dos Santos. He replaces Joao Miranda, who was rumored to be tired of the extensive travel the job requires and potentially ill. Vice-Minister Georges Chikoti may also not return to his position. These changes could offer new opportunities for improved USG engagement with the Foreign Ministry and the GRA. END SUMMARY

12. (C) Foreign Minister Assuncao Afonso dos Anjos has deep ties to the ruling MPLA, and served as President Dos Santos' Chief of Staff from 1985-97. Following that appointment he served as Ambassador to Portugal and Spain. The Portuguese, understandably, are thrilled with his appointment; the Portuguese Political Secretary told the Embassy his government believes having an Angolan foreign minister who understands the "Portuguese reality" will benefit their bilateral relationship. Dos Anjos told DASD Whelan that he has close ties to the United States as well, speaks passable English, and said that his children studied in the United States. Dos Anjos is known in diplomatic circles as intelligent, amiable, accessible, and "a talker."

Miranda Catches a Break

13. (C) Dos Anjos' appointment may represent a welcome relief to former Minister Joao Miranda, who reportedly asked to step down over a year ago. Reports as to why differ; some sources are absolutely confident that Miranda is ill with HIV and wants to spend more time with his family; other sources say that he was simply tired of the constant traveling required by the position and wanted to focus on developing his private business holdings. In any case, Miranda was seen by many as an "accidental" Foreign Minister when he ascended to the top post in 1999 following the death of his predecessor. Miranda had been Second Vice-Minister; the First Vice Minister had resigned shortly before the Minister's death, and President Dos Santos needed someone in-house who could keep up the wartime negotiations. Miranda had close ties to the FNLA, having served in their Executive Committee. He renounced ties to FNLA shortly after independence and joined the MPLA, working in the party's press/information office.

Chikoti's Job on the Line?

14. (C) While no announcement has been made on vice-ministerial appointments, high-ranking staffers at the Foreign Ministry told the embassy that Vice-Minister Georges Chikoti, a former UNITA member, will not be re-appointed. The Ministry's official line is that the Ministry is "in transition," and appointments are expected within the next two weeks. Chikoti may simply be in line for an ambassadorship or other position. The Portuguese Political Secretary told the Embassy that, while not yet publicly announced, the next Angolan Ambassador to Portugal is slated

to be Marcos Barrica, the former Minister of Youth and Sports, who led both SADC election observation missions to Zimbabwe earlier in the year.

15. (C) COMMENT: Though some rumors persist that Miranda and Chikoti are being shown the door due to weak MPLA ties, we believe the changes at the Ministry's highest levels bode well for USG/GRA engagement (the new Minister met the Charge and DASD Teresa Whalen during an October 9 meeting (reftel)).

Miranda, on the other hand, never made the U.S.-Angola bi-lateral relationship a priority; and Chikoti (potentially due to his need to live down his UNITA roots) was often the source of extended diatribes on the USG-inflicted ills in Angolan history. END COMMENT

HAWKINS